

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1901

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

AYLSHAM RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

TO THE

Chairman, Ladies, & Gentlemen of the Aylsham Rural District Council.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you a Report on the Health and Sanitary Condition of your District for the year 1901 :—

POPULATION.—The number of inhabitants in the District, as enumerated at the recent census, is 17,053. At the census of 1891 it was 17,452, and at that of 1881, 18,051. A comparison of these figures shows a steady decline in population, though, apparently, this was not going on so rapidly in the last decade as in the ten years ending in 1891.

The average annual decrease for the ten years 1881-90 was 60, while for the last ten years this figure has been reduced to just 40.

The Eynsford Sub-district accounts for all the decrease of population; the Buxton Sub-district showing an actual increase of 58 in the ten years. This great difference in the two Sub-districts is clearly due to the fact that while the Eynsford Sub-district is almost purely agricultural in character, the Buxton Sub-district includes the town of Aylsham and such villages as Coltishall, which have recently attracted population through the growing popularity of the Norfolk rivers and broads.

I regret I am not in a position to compare the alterations in population of individual parishes, but at present the details are not to be obtained from the Census Office.

BIRTHS.—The total number of Births registered in the district was 446 (males 216, females 230) giving a Birth-rate of only 25, which equals that of the previous year, and is far below the average for rural England. There is no appreciable difference in the Birth-rates of the two Sub-districts.

DEATHS.—The Deaths registered numbered 255. This is below the average (281), and gives the satisfactory Death-rate for a rural district of 14·9.

INFANT MORTALITY.—There were but 45 Deaths among infants under one year. This shows an improvement, and is indeed the lowest number recorded during the last five years. Allowance must, of course, be made for the low Birth-rate, but the Infant Death-rate per 1000 births is also extremely satisfactory, standing as it does at 100·9, considerably lower than the average for Rural Districts in England.

OLD AGE MORTALITY.—Deaths at ages over 65 numbered 118, giving an old age mortality for the year of 6·9 per 1000 population. The previous year had been characterised by a much heavier mortality among old people. This is to be attributed to the comparative mildness of the early winter. A green Christmas, in the case of the aged, at all events, does not always carry with it a full church-yard.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

During the past year the District has experienced an exceptional immunity from Infectious Disease. The number of notifications received has been far below that in any year since the adoption of the Notification Act, and only one fatal case among notifiable diseases has been registered.

There has been an entire absence of Enteric (typhoid) Fever, a malady which more than any other is an index of the sanitary condition of a district.

Of the 28 notifications received, 18 referred to Scarlet Fever, 8 to Diphtheria, and the remaining 2 to Erysipelas.

Subjoined are Tables showing the incidence of Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria, as to time of year and locality. From a perusal of these Tables it will be seen that in the great majority of instances the disease did not spread beyond the initial case.

DIPHTHERIA—The District for many years has been remarkably free from this disease. The average annual number of cases for the last five years being only 4·6.

During the past year eight cases were notified and one death was registered.

From the Table below it will be seen that three were isolated cases in Sall, Foulsham, and Skepton—widely separated parishes in the District; while the remaining five form a group at the end of the year in the parish of Oulton.

Of this group, the Oulton School must be considered the central infective point. The first case occurred at the School, and the remainder were all connected directly or indirectly with it.

The School water supply was suspected, but on examination nothing worse than a decayed pump-tree was discovered.

The most apparent insanitary condition was the existence, within a few yards of the School building, of a stagnant ditch which received the drainage from the School-house.

The School authorities are carrying out the suggestions of the Sanitary Committee for dealing with the nuisance.

The outbreak illustrates the great importance of care being taken with the Sanitary arrangements of Elementary Schools. Young children are most susceptible of infection, and the School affords a unique contrivance for the distribution of infectious disease.

TABLE SHOWING INCIDENCE OF DIPHTHERIA.

1901.	SALL.	FOULSHAM.	SKYTON	OULTON.	TOTAL.
JANUARY					
FEBRUARY ..	1				1
MARCH					
APRIL					
MAY		1			1
JUNE					
JULY					
AUGUST.....					
SEPTEMBER ..					
OCTOBER				1	1
NOVEMBER ..				3	3
DECEMBER ..			1	1	2
TOTAL.....	1	1	1	5	8

SCARLET FEVER.—No deaths were registered as due to Scarlet Fever, and but eighteen cases were notified during the year. This is all the more satisfactory from the fact that for some years past the District has suffered from the almost constant presence of this malady. The average annual number of notifications received during the last five years is 93.

The Table below shows that, with the exception of nine cases reported from Coltishall in September, all were single cases, from which the infection did not spread.

The Coltishall cases were mild in character, and some of them did not come under observation till a late stage of the disease had been reached.

TABLE SHOWING INCIDENCE OF SCARLET FEVER.

1901.	ALBY.	BLICKLING.	COLTISHALL.	CAWSTON.	FOULSHAM.	INGWORTH.	TOTALS.
JANUARY	1		1				2
FEBRUARY ..	1						1
MARCH							
APRIL							
MAY		1					1
JUNE			1				1
JULY						1	1
AUGUST.....							
SEPTEMBER ..			9	2	1		12
OCTOBER							
NOVEMBER ..							
DECEMBER ..							
TOTALS ..	2	1	11	2	1	1	18

MEASLES.—Only a few scattered cases came to my notice. No deaths were registered as due to this cause. A single case of German Measles was reported to me.

WHOOPIING COUGH.—During the first two months of the year this malady was prevalent in Hevingham and accounted for the deaths of two infants. With this exception the District was comparatively free.

INFLUENZA.—Eleven deaths are attributed to Influenza—six of them being of persons over 65 years of age. Although this is a heavy mortality, it is considerably less than that of the previous year, when 29 deaths were recorded.

The spread of this disease appears to be favoured by a low temperature more than by anything else, and to the mildness of the winter months of 1901 must be attributed the main cause of this diminished mortality.

SANITARY CONDITION OF THE DISTRICT.

A year characterised by the presence of little Infectious Disease is sometimes associated with a correspondingly small amount of Sanitary work carried out. It is true that the occurrence of Infectious Diseases is often the means of attracting attention to insanitary conditions, but, nevertheless, during the year 1901 much useful work of a permanent character has been effected in the district.

DRAINAGE.—The Drainage of the small towns and larger villages present many difficulties, but each year sees some of these overcome. During the past year the drainage of Unicorn Yard, Hungate Street, and Millgate Street, in Aylsham, has been successfully grappled with, and a large number of un-trapped gullies have been replaced by modern street gullies. The drains have also been properly ventilated. By this means a series of nuisances of a peculiar dangerous character are removed. A large amount of work of this character still remains to be done.

WATER SUPPLY.—This is entirely from wells, and one of the chief duties of the Sanitary Inspector is to prevent the pollution of these wells by soakage from heaps of refuse and privy bins.

The principle acted on is to keep all collections of refuse above the surface level of the soil and as far removed as possible from the well. For privies the pail system or surface bins are advocated.

Eleven wells have been repaired under the direction of the Sanitary Committee, and four new wells have been sunk.

PRIVIES.—Four new privies have been built, and many others repaired and altered. Besides this work of a permanent character, the emptying of privy bins has occupied the attention of the Inspector.

COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.—With the somewhat rapidly diminishing population, it is contrary to expectation to find difficulty in the housing of the labouring classes. This, however, is the case in some villages. The larger estates and farms are, as a rule, provided with good cottages. It is in villages where the cottages surround commons, and are in the hands of small owners, that they are constructed on bad principles, as regards ventilation, and contain an insufficient number of bed-rooms. Over-crowding in these localities is very commonly found. Each year a few modern cottages of a good type are built, and each year some of the old variety fall into decay past repair, so that a gradual improvement is being effected.

In no part of this District has the want of cottage accommodation been so pressing as to warrant any special measures being adopted.

The average number of persons per house in the District is 4.2.

VACCINATION.—I append a few figures relating to Vaccination.

IN THE EYNSFORD SUB-DISTRICT.

Children under one year Vaccinated	...	...	...	175
„ over „ „	...	...	...	7
Summonses taken out	...	...	...	0
Children exempted under Conscience Clause	...	...	...	7

IN THE BUXTON SUB-DISTRICT.

Children under one year Vaccinated	...	...	...	179
„ over „ „	...	...	...	0
Summonses taken out	...	...	...	1
Children exempted under Conscience Clause	...	...	...	9

These figures may be considered satisfactory. The number of infants for whom exemption under the Conscience Clause was claimed has fallen to sixteen. In the previous year there were twenty-five exemptions. The total number of Vaccinations performed by the Public Vaccinator exceeded that of 1900 by thirty.

I HAVE THE HONOUR TO REMAIN,

YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

HERBERT H. BACK,

ACLE,

Medical Officer of Health.

March 14th, 1902.

